

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, June 24, 2025

Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA

The Broadmoor (East Course)

Ernie Els

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to welcome four-time major champion and World Golf Hall of Fame member Ernie Els here into the media center. Ernie, a win in Hawai'i a little bit earlier this year, seven top-10 finishes. How are you feeling about your game coming into this week here at the Broadmoor?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, thank you. We've played quite a few events already this year. I felt it a bit last week. I wasn't sharp enough. I've done some work the last couple of days here since I arrived at the Broadmoor to sharpen up a little bit more.

I felt I wasn't quite there last week. I've had a pretty nice year up until now, quite consistent, with the one win. But comparing that to what Miguel has been doing, I'm obviously not doing enough. He's having an unbelievable year.

Looking forward to this week, obviously, and I've done a bit more work to really get myself prepared.

Q. Here at the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, we're at altitude. Is there anything you do to adjust a little bit, whether that's actually playing or your training and getting around here?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, I can tell you we just walked up the steps here and I was trying to find my breath. I grew up in South Africa at altitude, almost as high as this. I think it was five and a half thousand feet, so it brings back a couple of memories, how the ball flies in the air, especially when it gets warm. I played nine holes very first thing this morning, and the ball doesn't go quite as far as it will in the afternoons and depending on the weather.

I played a lot of golf at The International, at Castle Pines in Denver, so I'm just going back into the experience book of what I did there, and it's basically 10 percent when it's warm, and the up and down, you have to calculate it.



We'll figure that out. It's just getting yourself ready on these greens. We're playing on the slope very close to the mountain here, so there's a lot of slope on the greens and a lot of slope in the fairway, so getting the ball in play is going to be key.

Q. You mentioned you played nine this morning. You played yesterday, and the greens are certainly a challenge. What do you expect to be some of the most important aspect of anyone's game out here to be successful?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, every week, even on the Champions Tour, the guy that gets it in play is a good ball striker.

I think this week, that's, again, a key. You have to be a good driver of the ball. Iron play, you've got to figure out your yardages, which is going to be key. It's going to be very different than we're used to.

Then when you get yourself on the putting surfaces, you've got to get yourself on the right side of the flag if you can from the fairway. That will make your job a little bit easier.

Then reading your putts. There's huge slope.

So there's a lot of things we have to battle this week. But we're playing in the most beautiful environment. You're not going to find a more beautiful environment than here. We're very fortunate to be able to be playing the Broadmoor.

Q. You've played in 27 U.S. Opens. This is your fifth Senior Open. What have you come to expect from playing in these USGA championships over the past few decades?

ERNIE ELS: Well, obviously on the main tour, the USGA, they really want to find the best player that week. Obviously, for us on the senior level, that's also the case, but playing so many regular U.S. Opens, playing a U.S. Senior Open is a little bit more tame, if I can say that. We can breathe a little bit.

It's still going to be very difficult. They're trying to do exactly the same examination of getting the best player in the field. But at least we can move the ball around a little bit out of the fairways. It's not as demanding long. It's a



bit more playable.

I went to Oakmont on Sunday last week, and I was very fortunate and very happy that I wasn't playing there because I don't think I could handle that anymore.

I love playing USGA events. I've loved it my whole career. That's why I think I've played well in them is that I know that everything gets tested.

Q. Given that you got one of your very first starts on the PGA TOUR in this state and you ended up winning an International, is this state special to return to?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, absolutely. Nobody ever even heard of me, not even in South Africa, back in those days. Kaye Kessler, he had a good word there with Mr. Vickers, and out of the blue I got this invite to come and play at The International. I think it was 1991. I can't even remember how I played. I'm sure I didn't come close to making the cut. I think I was intimidated.

But that's where that relationship started with Colorado golf and the Vickers family and The International at Castle Pines. I was this close to buying a house down the 10th hole. But I was talked out of it because it was too far west and so forth, all these excuses. I'm still kicking myself not buying a house at Castle Pines back in the '90s.

But I still have friends in the area, wonderful people. I've enjoyed so much golf around this area. I've played the Broadmoor with Tommy Vickers. He brought me down here many years ago, so I had a look around then and loved it.

I've spent a lot of time in Vail. A lot of people up there. A lot of time I've spent here and a lot of great times.

Q. What do you think about the U.S. Senior Open coming back in two future years to the Broadmoor?

ERNIE ELS: Really?

Q. '31 and '37.

ERNIE ELS: Okay, I'm definitely coming for '31, if I'm still around, touch wood. So pencil me in for '31. That's great news. Everything about this resort is fantastic. I've got most of my family here. I brought Ben, and my wife is here, and Samantha hopefully will be here. But it feels like a bit of a holiday for all of us.

They're up in a mountain right now as we speak, so I'm going to take the afternoon off and go and join them.

It's really -- you can get out. This is what the Senior Tour is all about. It's playing golf at the highest level but enjoying yourself.

Q. Jack Nicklaus compared these greens to Augusta National. Maybe not quite as severe. Do you see that the same way, or is there another course that compares?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah, there's golf courses that compare. Every time you come near a hill or a mountain in this case, you're going to have some slope. This golf course was designed back in the day with green speeds a little bit different. So green speeds are up in the modern day, same type of contours on the greens. You're going to have some speed and slope to deal with, and I think that's a defense of the golf course. It's a very fair course. Everything is in front of you. I think that's a good comparison.

Obviously Augusta National, the speed is a bit different, a little bit quicker even than here, but this slope and where you have to position your ball for 18 holes is key. If you can get an uphill putt, you can have a go at it. But anything down or from the side, there's huge slopes and speed issues.

We're going to have to be on our guard. That's why controlling your ball into the fairways, getting yourself with an iron, put spin on it, is very important. So a very controlled player will do well here this week.

Q. Is it fun for you where fairways still matter at a championship?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah. I mean, that's the old argument. The guys hit it so long, and when the rough is not quite penal enough, in their estimation, they want to get it as close to the green as possible, and they can get the ball out of the rough. But if you get the rough nice and juicy. Then you've got to play golf. You've got to play all 14 clubs in the bag, not just a driver and a wedge or whatever.

That's what the USGA is trying to do. I'm sure we're going to all complain because that's what we do. But I think that the examination has to be as tough as it possibly can be but fair in the same way. We'll have it this week.

Q. You mentioned you were back at Oakmont for the U.S. Open a week and a half ago. What was it like to be back there at a place that was obviously so special for you in your career early on?

ERNIE ELS: Yeah. I wasn't going to go up, but then watching a lot of golf, and I did make some comments on

social media, and so I couldn't help myself.

I just felt that it was such a big moment in our lives, as a family and for me professionally, getting a 10-year exemption. Winning in '94 as a 24-year-old really set me up. I just really felt I wanted to get back to Oakmont because we are so busy. They've made us honorary members, all the past champions, but we never get to go there.

I thought, let me go up there. I went up Sunday. Just wanted to put my feet on the ground and walk the clubhouse again, say hi to some of the people that I've known for such a long time and just feel it again. Who knows; I probably will get back there and play a round of golf, but not at a U.S. Open. U.S. Open, when is that going back there?

Q. '33.

ERNIE ELS: So maybe I will go back there. But I just wanted to kind of get my feet on the ground again and get that special feeling because Arnold Palmer, he retired from the U.S. Open golf that week, and I remember that clearly. All those memories come back to you.

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